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XIII. EFFECTS

OF LIGHTNING ON THE HOUSE OF CAPT. THOMAS MANNING, IN PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE;

In a letter to the Rev. John Eliot, D. D. F. A. A.

By Rev. TIMOTHY ALDEN, jun. A. M. S. H. S.

Portsmouth, N. H. 14 December, 1808.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

IT appears upon inquiry, that several persons have, at different times, been killed by lightning in Portsmouth and its vicinity; but, in no instance, as I can learn, in a *close room.*

That the danger however from an electric explosion is as great in a *close,* as in an *open* room, seems evident from the circumstances detailed in the following narrative.

On Friday, in the afternoon of the twenty second of last May, the north front of captain Thomas Manning's dwelling house, near to Liberty Bridge in this town, was considerably injured by lightning. Commencing at the northwest corner, the lightning tore off several feet of the clapboards near the corner, between the eaves and lower story. It then took a horizontal direction, just above the window frame, and entered the lower room, shivering the moulding, and starting, for several feet, the plaistering of the planchment, contiguous to it. Between the two front windows it burst off the boards, externally, and the most of the plaistering, internally, from the planchment to the floor; threw down a large looking glass, which was broken, seemingly, into a thousand pieces; burnt a considerable part of a muslin covering, which was drawn over the face of the glass; and turned a table, which stood under it, upside down, casting it near-

ly into the middle of the room. A part of the fluid passed from the moulding before mentioned, three or four feet, to the ornamental wood work over the mantle piece, where it split off, about six feet from the floor, a strip of several inches in length, threw down a small picture, and greatly tarnished the gilding of an elegant picture frame, which was fixed directly over the fire place.

The room, of which we speak, is remarkably tight. The window shutters, which are of the sliding kind, were all closed. The door was bolted. The fire board, which is fitted very nicely to the jambs, was in its place, previously to the tempest, but was thrown forward a few inches by the percussion, and rested against the top of the andirons, which were not removed.

The members of the family, at home, were, providentially, in a part of the house remote from the scene of destruction, and were not aware of the injury done to the building, till informed by some of their neighbours. If they had been in the room, which was so greatly damaged, at the time of this explosion, their lives, I think, must have been in the most imminent danger.

I am, reverend and dear sir,

your humble servant,

TIMOTHY ALDEN, jun.